

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: GREEK-SOVIET TALKS ON BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. A SERIES OF TALKS ON GREEK-SOVIET
RELATIONS, IN WHICH OFFICIALS OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS HEADED BY MINISTER BITSIOS AND A SOVIET EMBASSY
DELEGATION HEADED BY THE AMBASSADOR IN ATHENS, IVAN UDALTSOV,
ARE PARTICIPATING, BEGAN IN ATHENS ON OCTOBER 25.
ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL SOURCES THE TALKS WILL COVER POLITICAL,
ECONOMIC, TRADE, TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE
TWO COUNTRIES. AFTER INITIAL DISCUSSIONS AT THE BITSIOS-
UDALTSOV LEVEL, MORE SPECIFIC MEETINGS ON THESE SUBJECTS
WILL BE DISCUSSED BY "EXPERTS" FROM THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE
TALKS COME SHORTLY AFTER AN EXCHANGE DURING THE
OCTOBER 20 PARLIAMENTARY "DEBATE" BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER
CARAMANLIS AND PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION LEADER MAVROS IN WHICH
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MAVROS DESCRIBED GREEK-SOVIET RELATIONS AS BEING IN A STATE OF

"INERTIA" AND THE PRIME MINISTER PUT THE BLAME ON THE SOVIET SIDE THAT RELATIONS ARE NOT BETTER. ON THE SAME DAY, THE ATHENS DAILY VRADYNI (PRO-GOVERNMENT) PUBLISHED A LENGTHY ARTICLE ALLEGING THAT UDALTSOV, AS A KGB AGENT, WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SOVIET INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN AUGUST 1968, AND ASKING RHETIRICALLY WHY HE HAD BEEN ASSIGNED TO ATHENS. END SUMMARY.

2. A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT THESE BILATERAL TALKS WAS FIRST MADE BY "OFFICIAL SOURCES" ON OCTOBER 23. (WE HAD HEARD ABOUT THEM EARLIER THIS MONTH.) THESE SOURCES SAID THAT THE TWO SIDES WOULD EXAMINE EXISTING AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES AS WELL AS THE FURTHER PROMOTION OF ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND OTHER RELATIONS. THEY INDICATED THAT A TRADE AGREEMENT, WHICH WAS "DRAFTED LONG AGO," WILL BE SIGNED FOLLOWING "CERTAIN CLARIFICATIONS" FROM MOSCOW, WHILE TWO OTHER EXISTING AGREEMENTS, ON SHIPPING AND DOUBLE TAXATION, ARE STILL IN FORCE.

3. ON OCTOBER 25 A GOVERNMENT SOURCE STATED THE FOLLOWING IN CONNECTION WITH THE TALKS: "THE GREEK GOVERNMENT ATTACHES SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE TO THE TALKS. IT HAS EVERY REASON TO EXPECT THEY WILL PROVE CONSTRUCTIVE AND COVER ALL SECTORS OF BILATERAL RELATIONS. IT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND THAT IT IS A FIRM AIRM OF GREEK POLICY TO DEVELOP THE BEST POSSIBLE RELATIONS WITH ALL COUNTRIES, AND ESPECIALLY SO WITH THE SOVIET UNION WHICH HAPPENS TO BE A GREAT POWER. IN THAT CONTEXT, THE TALKS WHICH BEGAN YESTERDAY (SIC) DO NOT, OF COURSE, IMPLY A REAPPRAISAL OF GREEK POLICY AS HAS BEEN IRRESPONSIBLY REPORTED; THEY DO NOT CONSTITUTE A SPECIAL EVENT EITHER. PREPARATIONS FOR THE TALKS BEGAN A FEW MONTHS AGO, AND THEIR PURPOSE IS TO PROMOTE COOPERATION AND FRIENDLY CONTACTS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IN ALL SECTORS IN WHICH THERE ARE CONSIDERABLE MARGINS TO THAT EFFECT."

4. THE SUBJECT OF GREEK-SOVIET RELATIONS CAME UP DURING THE OCTOBER 20 FOREIGN POLICY "DEBATE" IN PARLIAMENT WHICH DEALT PRIMARILY WITH GREEK-TURKISH AND US-GREEK RELATIONS. IN HIS STATEMENT DURING THE "DEBATE," THE PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LEADER, GEORGE MAVROS, PRESIDENT OF THE UNION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER, COMMENTED THAT GREECE'S RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION HAVE NOT BEEN ADVANCED SUFFICIENTLY. THE PRIME MINISTER INTERRUPTED TO STATE THAT RELATIONS WITH THE USSR "ARE GOOD" BUT COULD BE BETTER BUT IF THEY ARE NOT "THE RESPONSIBILITY IS NOT OURS, IT IS THEIRS." WHEN MAVROS SAID HE HAD MENTIONED THAT RESPONSIBILITY ALSO LAY WITH THE "OTHER SIDE" THE PRIME MINISTER STATED "ONLY WITH

THE OTHER SIDE."

5. ANOTHER INCIDENT PROVIDES A FURTHER INTERESTING SIDELIGHT. ON OCTOBER 20, VRADYNI, A PRO-GOVERNMENT AFTERNOON PAPER, CARRIED A THREE-PAGE FEATURE ARTICLE ON AMBASSADOR UDALTSOV, WITH BANNER HEADLINES AND PICTURES OF THE FIGHTING IN PRAGUE DURING THE SOVIET INVASION IN 1968. ALLEGEDLY BASED ON THE TESTIMONY OF FORMER COLLABORATORS OF THEN CZECH PRIME MINISTER DUBCEK, THE STORY CHARGED THAT UDALTSOV WAS A KGB AGENT IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND, AS POLITICAL COUNSELOR AND ACTUAL HEAD OF THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN PRAGUE, HAD PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE 1968 SOVIET INVASION. THE ARTICLE REPORTEDLY WAS BASED LARGELY ON AN INTERVIEW WITH EXILED CZECH GENERAL JAN SEINA, WHO CLAIMED PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF UDALTSOV'S POSITION IN PRAGUE FROM HIS OWN POSITION AS DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE CZECH MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. DURING THE INTERVIEW, SEINA ALSO REPORTEDLY ALLEGED, ACCORDING TO VRADYNI, THAT UDALTSOV WAS KNOWN AS A STALINIST WITHIN THE CPSU AND WAS A SPECIALIST IN COUPS. THE ARTICLE ASKS RHETORICALLY WHY, WITH THIS BACKGROUND, WAS UDALTSOV ASSIGNED AS AMBASSADOR TO ATHENS. ANOTHER UNIDENTIFIED CZECH EXILE GAVE THREE POSSIBLE REASONS IN THE STORY: TO UNDERMINE THE INDEPENDENT GREEK COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE INTERIOR, WHICH CONDEMNED THE SOVIET INVASION; TO USE ATHENS AS A BASE OF OPERATIONS AGAINST YUGOSLAVIA AFTER TITO'S DEATH; OR TO BE ON HAND TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OTHER DISTURBANCES IN THE BALKANS AND THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN. THE VRADYNI ARTICLE WAS NOT PICKED UP BY OTHER PAPERS, EXCEPT FOR THE MOSCOW-ORIENTED COMMUNIST PARTY DAILY, RIZOSPASTIS, WHICH CITED IT AS EVIDENCE OF A GOVERNMENT-INSPIRED ANTI-SOVIET CAMPAIGN.

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6. THE GREEK-SOVIET TALKS ARE ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL STORIES IN THE PRESS YESTERDAY AND TODAY. MOST PAPERS ARE PREDICTING THAT FOREIGN MINISTER KITSIOS, AND PERHAPS LATER PRIME MINISTER KARAMANLIS, WILL BE INVITED TO VISIT MOSCOW, IF THE TALKS GO WELL. WE WILL BE REPORTING FURTHER ON THE TALKS AS DETAILS ABOUT THEM BECOME AVAILABLE.
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